

*ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES  
FOR THE EXTERIOR REHABILITATION OF  
BUILDINGS IN ROCKVILLE'S  
HISTORIC DISTRICTS*

*THE INDIVIDUAL HOUSE*

*Adopted  
September 1977*

*ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION*

## ELEMENTS OF AN INDIVIDUAL HOUSE

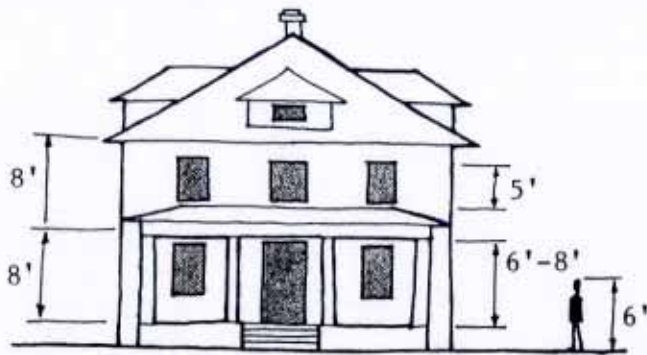
The preceding series of sketches has illustrated the more important ways in which individual buildings relate both to each other and to the streetscape as a whole. At the same time, individual buildings possess such elements as dormers, roofs, turrets, columns, windows, and doorways that act in a similar fashion. By their size, proportions, and placement, these elements not only help relate the single building to its surroundings but also combine to determine its own intrinsic architectural character and expression.

Among the older Rockville houses, a harmonious balance may generally be seen to exist among the forms, details, and materials of a given building. It is that very balance which, in the final analysis, serves to give the various building styles and types in Rockville their inherent visual character and appeal. When improvements are considered for a particular building, great care should be taken to maintain this characteristic balance -- especially if certain departures from or additions to the original are contemplated.

The following series of sketches is designed to help illustrate how this balance of forms, details, and materials has been obtained in the more prevalent styles of Rockville houses. These drawings are not intended to discourage all modifications to the original fabric of a house. Rather, they have been conceived to help illuminate the essential elements that shape the visual character of these various styles of houses and so help guide those considering improvements and/or modifications in retaining that essential character. Some case studies are presented to show why certain types of modification are more appropriate than others.

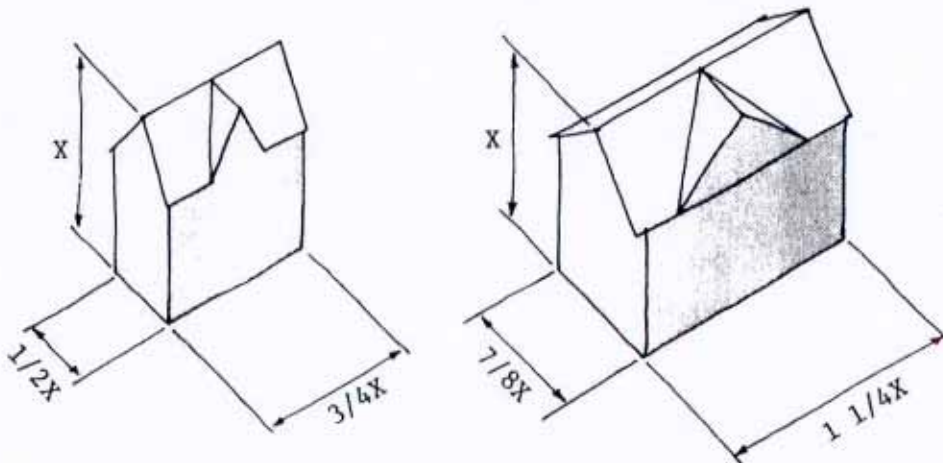
## THE ROCKVILLE DESIGN VOCABULARY

The sense of continuity is strong among houses of similar size which are placed regularly along a street. Other factors, though perhaps more subtle, are equally influential in relating the houses of a given neighborhood, establishing the intrinsic character and wholeness of the individual house, and distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate building modifications. The basic factors of this design vocabulary in Rockville are presented below:



### Scale

Scale is the apparent size of a building, door, window, or other element as perceived in relation to the size of a human being. The scale of one element may be altered simply by a change in the size of another element nearby.

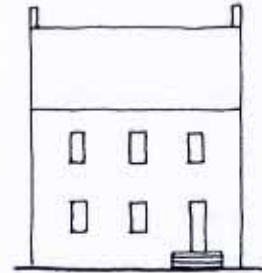


### Proportion

The form of a building is established by the ratio of its width to its height or of front area to side depth.

### Ratio of Solids to Voids

The percentage of total facade area given to openings (windows, doors, arches, etc.) affects the appearance and scale of a building. Certain different solid/void ratios are appropriate to different architectural styles in Rockville.



10% VOID



35% VOID

### Rhythm of Solids and Voids

The regular recurrence of elements such as windows and doorways may be used to break the monotony of a large facade or building form.







### Proportions of Openings in Facade

The ratio of width to height of the windows and doors helps to set the rhythm and scale of a front facade.



$\frac{1}{1}$  LIGHT



$\frac{2}{2}$  LIGHT



$\frac{6}{1}$  LIGHT

### Window Lights

The number and proportion of "lights," or panes, in double-hung windows also helps to set the scale and rhythm of a facade. Different treatments of this feature are appropriate to different house styles in Rockville.



VERTICAL



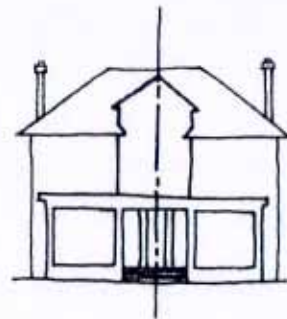
HORIZONTAL

### Directional Emphasis

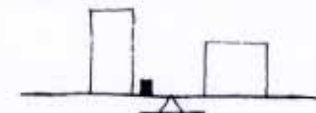
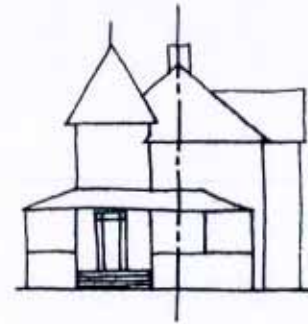
A building may have a predominantly vertical or predominantly horizontal character.

### Symmetry/Asymmetry

Overall balance, important in every building design, may be achieved through symmetry -- the use of identical elements on both sides of its central axis. Or the design may employ asymmetry -- a balance of differing elements.



SYMMETRICAL  
BALANCE



ASYMMETRICAL  
BALANCE

### Materials/Textures/Colors

Within an area, the general surface appearance of buildings is determined by predominant materials, textures, and colors.

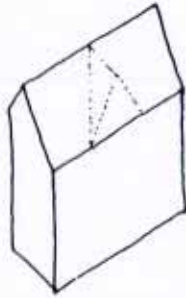
The predominant material may be wood siding and shingles, stucco, or brick.

The predominant texture may be patterned (horizontal wood siding, sometimes with shingles), unbroken (stucco), or rough (brick with tooled joints).

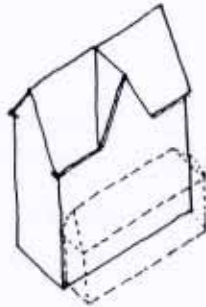
The predominant color may be that of a natural material or a painted one or a patina colored by time. Accent or blending of trim colors is also a factor.



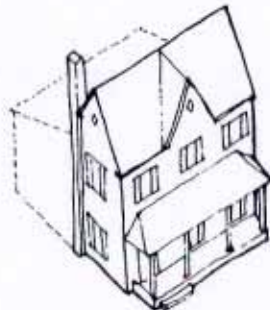
THE VICTORIAN COTTAGE IS CHARACTERIZED BY:



A basic block with gable roof (gable ends at the sides of the house)



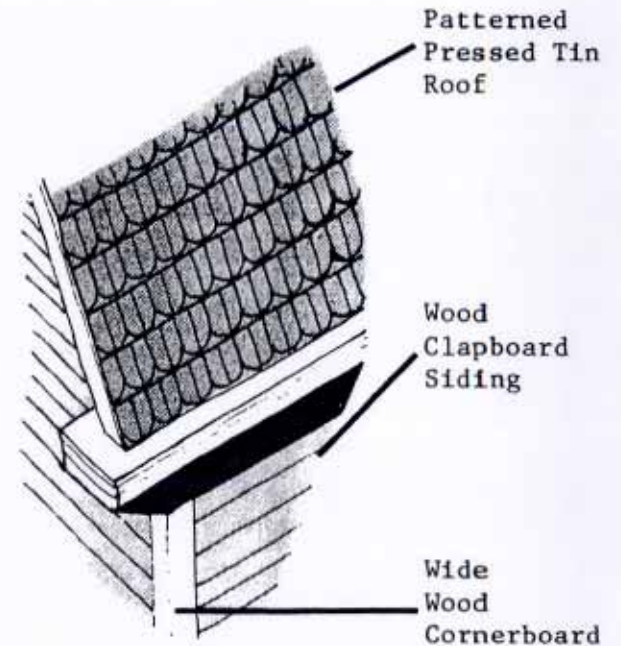
A central flank gable, often with ornamental window or vent



A porch, in either classical or more ornamental "Eastlake" style, across the entire front of the house

Sometimes, an addition on the rear

Roof Corner Detail



Flank Gable

Ornamental  
Vent with  
Flat Trim

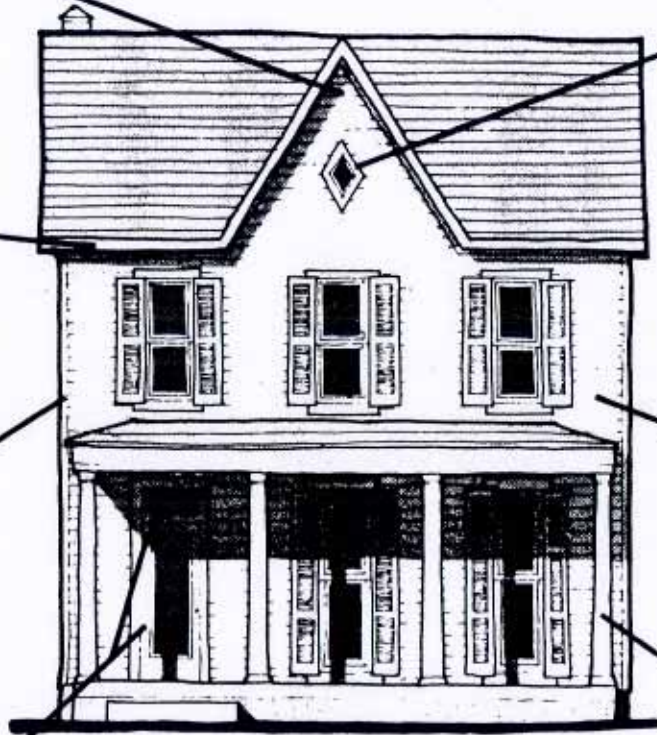
Cornice

Cornerboard

Clapboard Siding

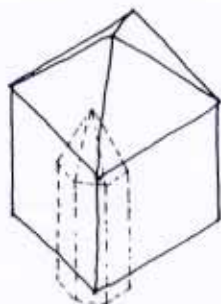
Front Door  
with  
Transom

Classical  
Style  
Porch Columns

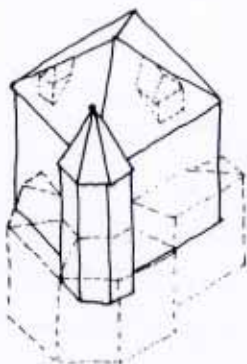




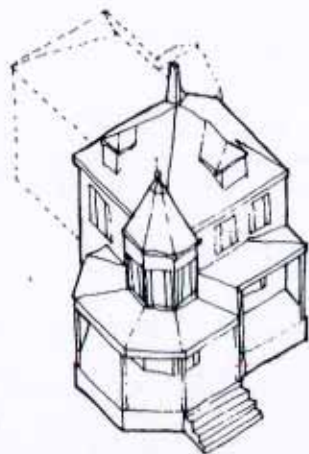
THE QUEEN ANNE STYLE HOUSE IS CHARACTERIZED BY:



A basic block (in this example, with a hipped roof)

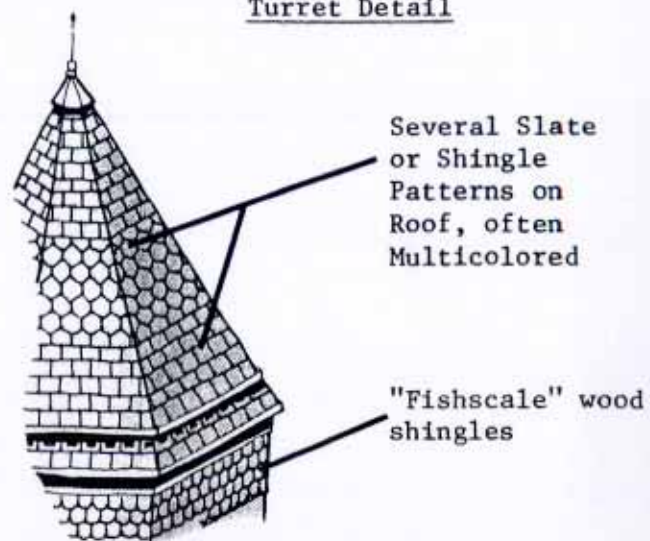


Addition of other volumetric elements such as turrets, projecting bays, broad porches, and dormers

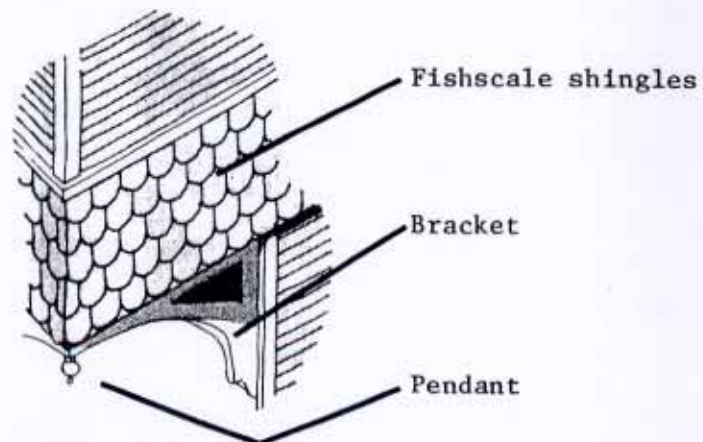


An asymmetrically balanced composition and a rich variety of shapes, colors, and surface textures

Turret Detail



"Rockville Bay" Detail



Octagonal  
Turret

Combination of  
Shingle and  
Clapboard  
Siding

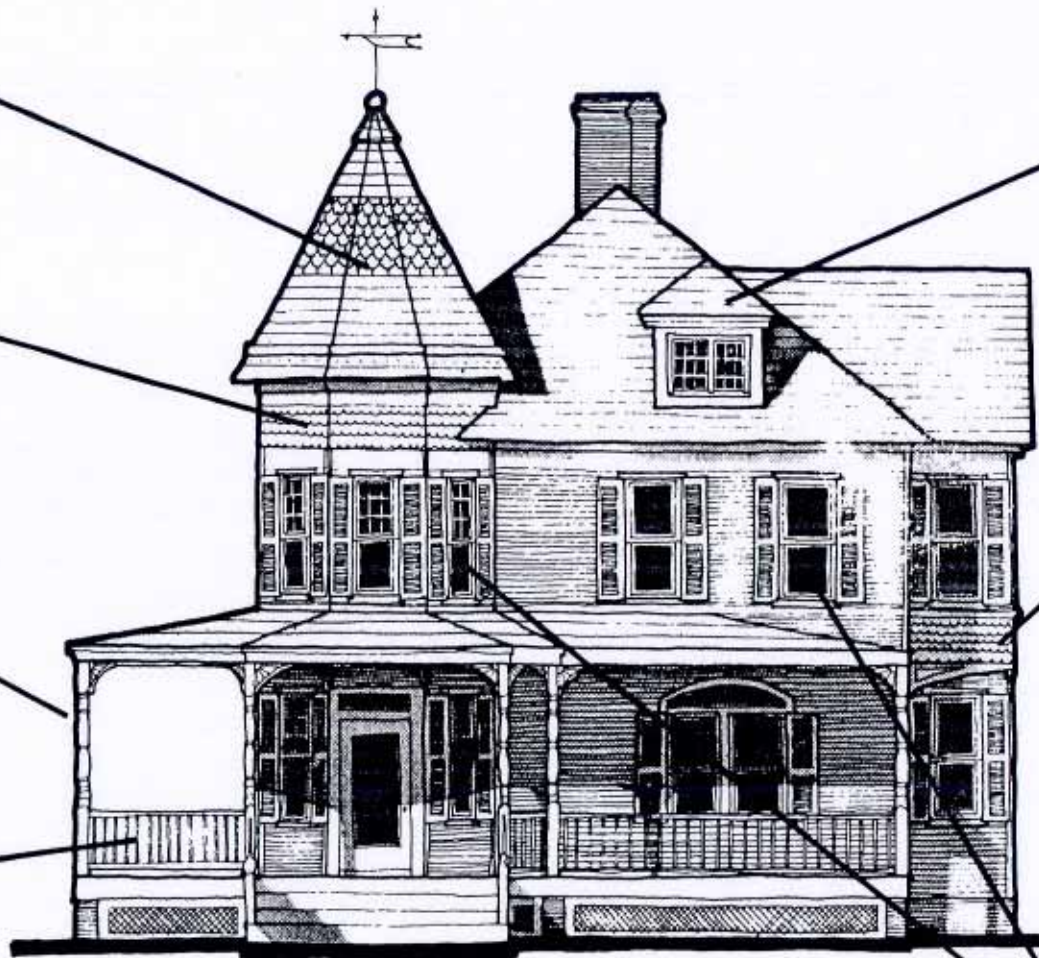
"Eastlake"  
Column  
(Resembles  
a turned  
furniture leg)

Spindle  
Balustrade

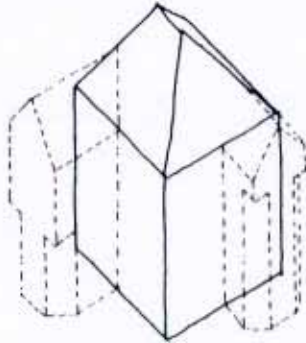
Hipped Dormer

"Rockville Bay"

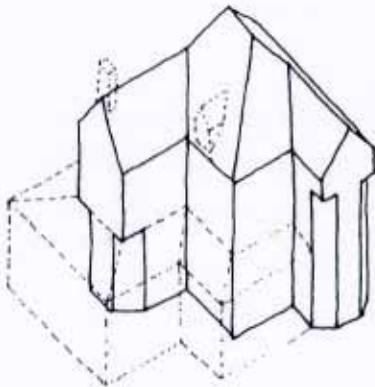
Six-over-one and  
One-over-one  
Windows



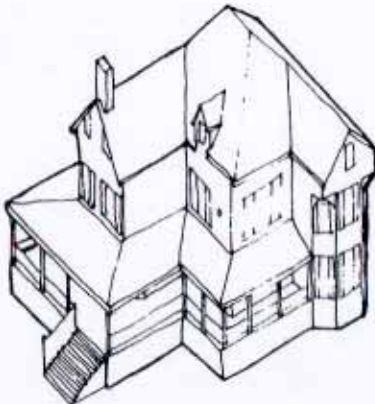
THE EASTLAKE STYLE HOUSE IS CHARACTERIZED BY:



An irregular form basically similar to that of the Queen Anne style

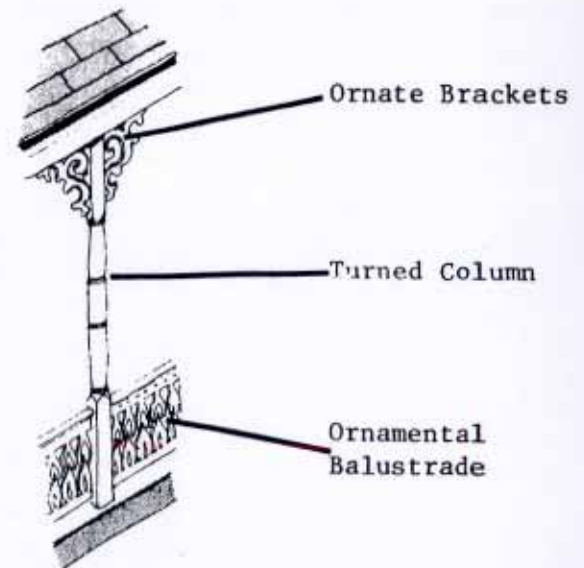
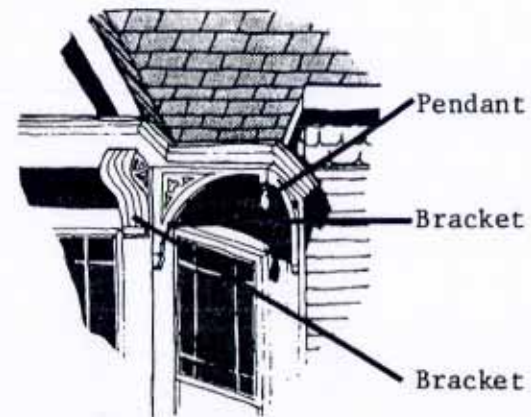


The addition of porches, bays, and dormers



A distinctive type of three-dimensional ornamentation that includes turned columns, spindled railings, and curved brackets

Typical Eastlake Details

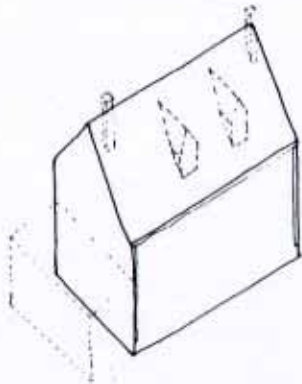




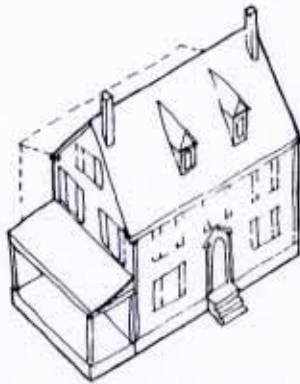




THE FEDERAL REVIVAL STYLE HOUSE IS CHARACTERIZED BY:



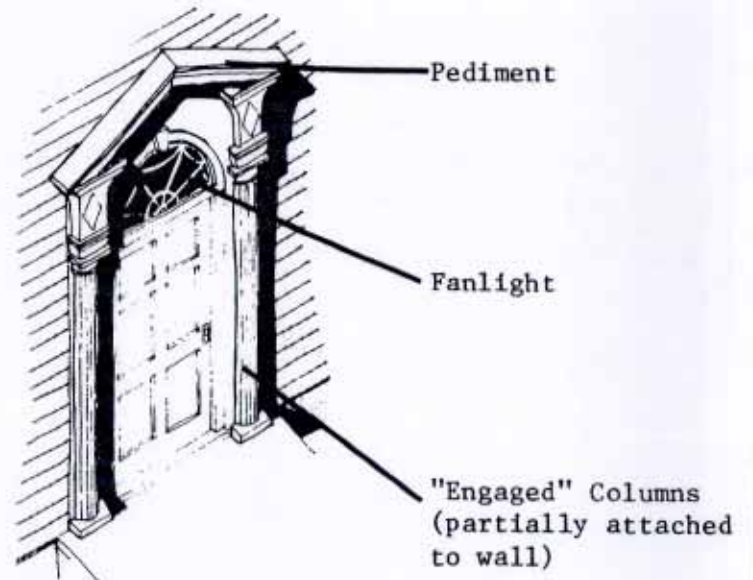
A basic three-bay block, usually with side gables

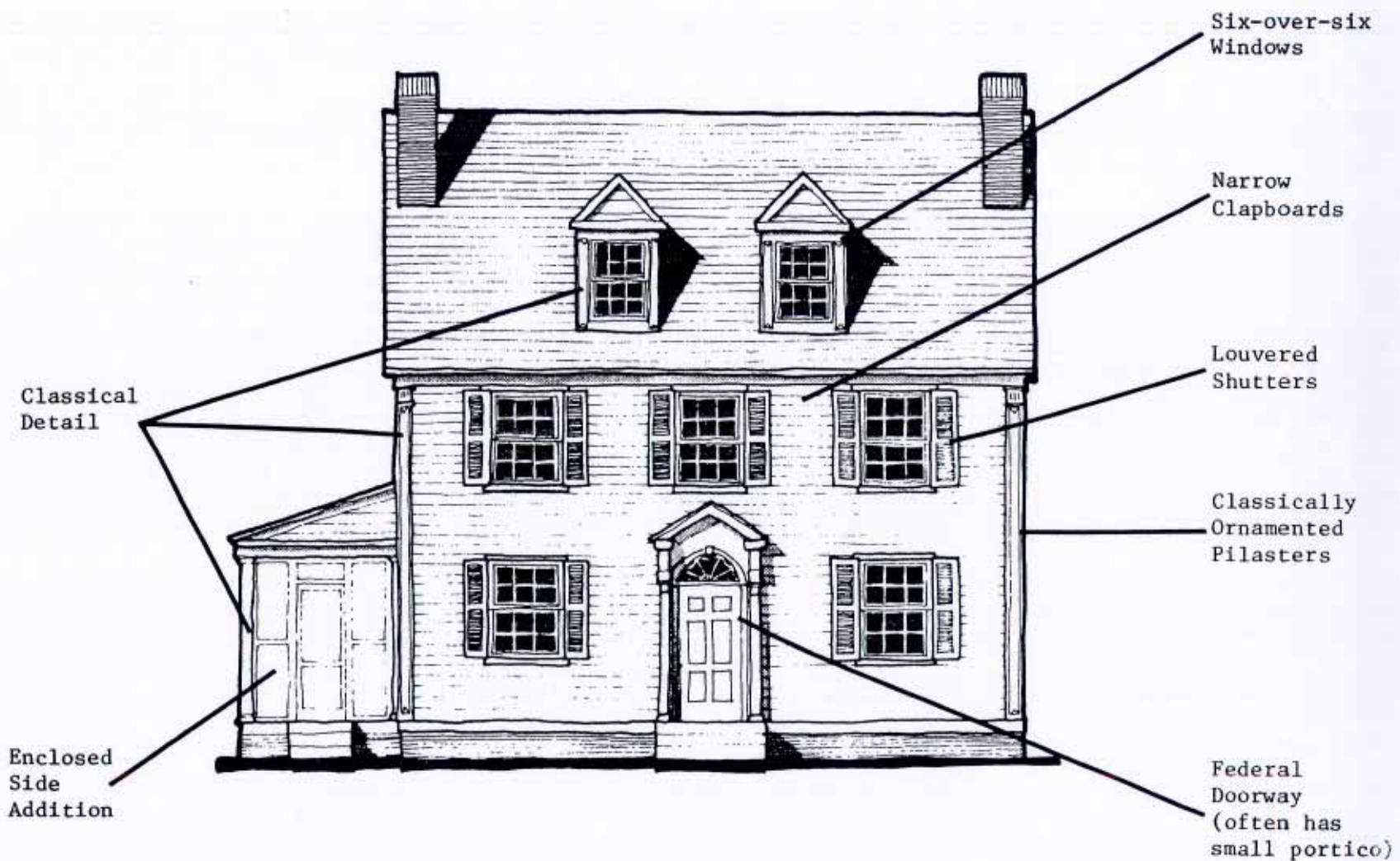


Symmetrically placed dormers, chimneys, and fenestration; sometimes, enclosed side or rear additions

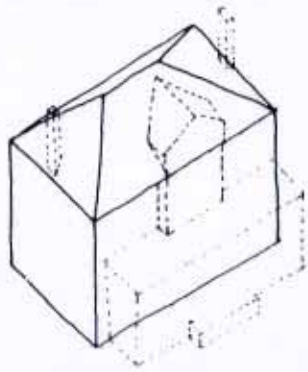
Restraint in ornamentation of doorways, shutters, dormers

Portal Detail

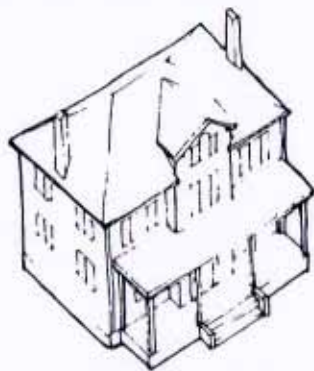




THE COLONIAL REVIVAL STYLE HOUSE IS CHARACTERIZED BY:



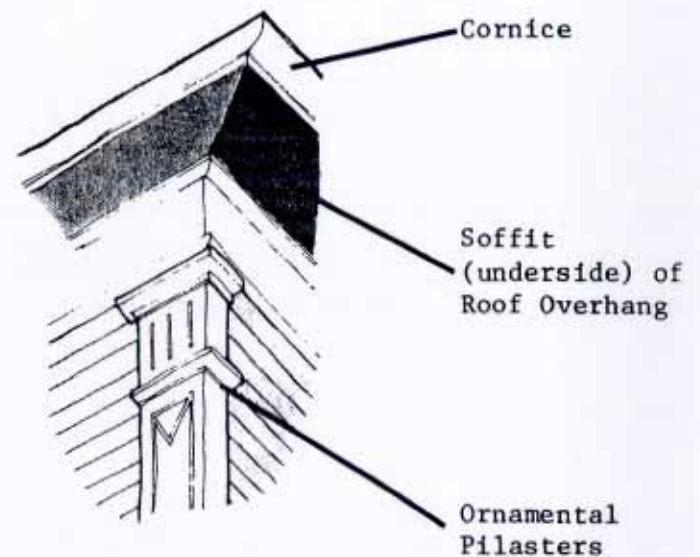
A basic block (in this example, with ridged hip roof) and central pedimented pavilion



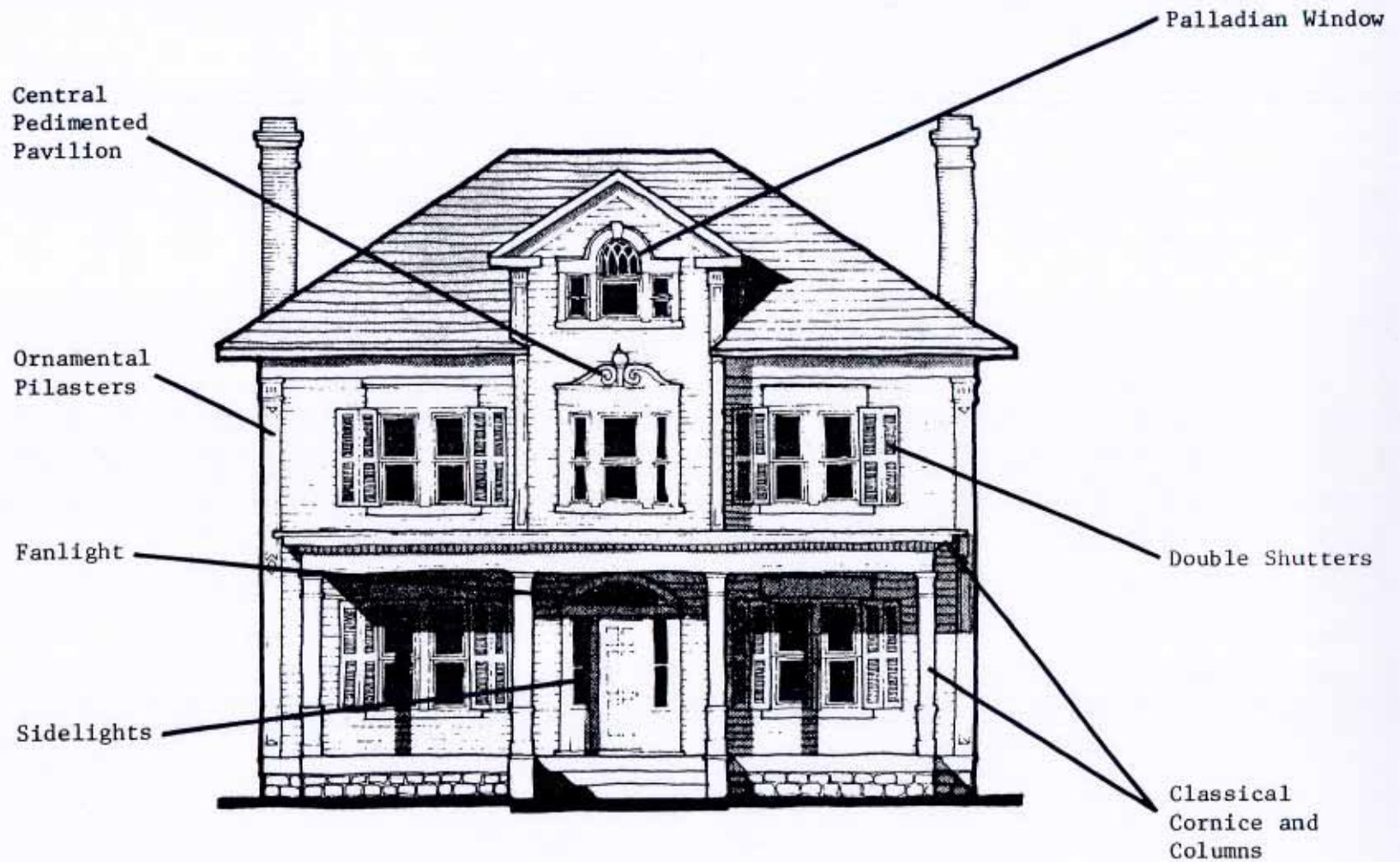
Ornate doorways with sidelights and flat or arched fanlights

Single or double shutters typical

Corner Detail

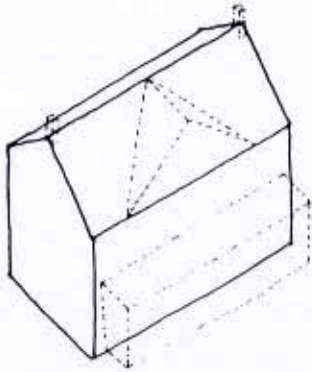






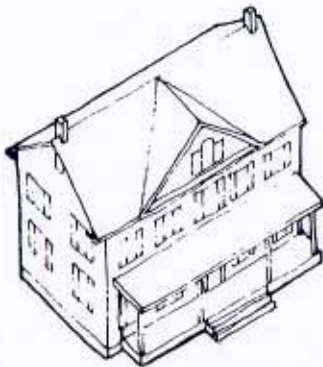


THE GEORGIAN REVIVAL STYLE HOUSE IS CHARACTERIZED BY:



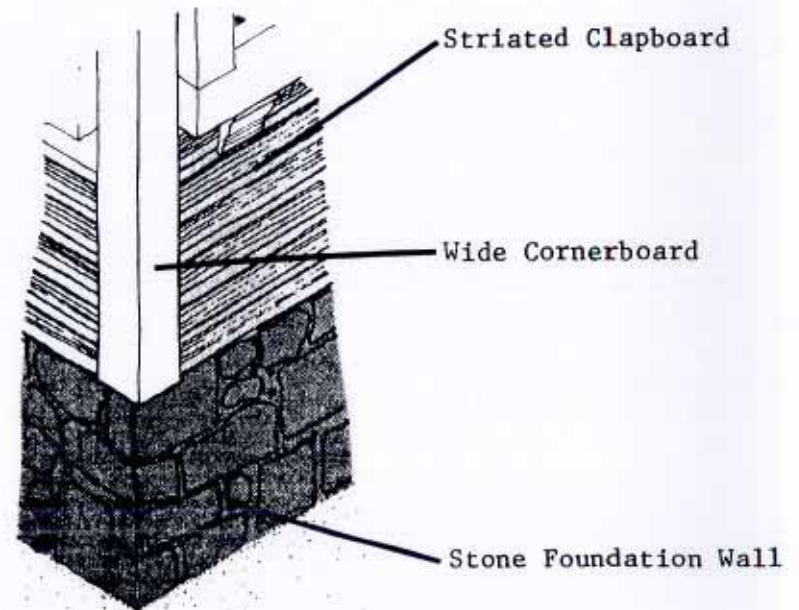
A basic three- or five-bay block with side gables

A pedimented front gable and symmetrical placement of porch, chimneys, and fenestration



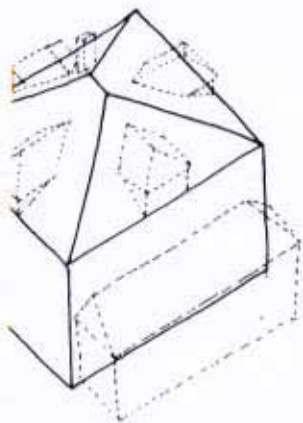
Large amounts of window area; special significance given to central windows (especially Palladian window) and ornate doorway

Corner Detail





THE GEORGIAN REVIVAL COTTAGE IS CHARACTERIZED BY:

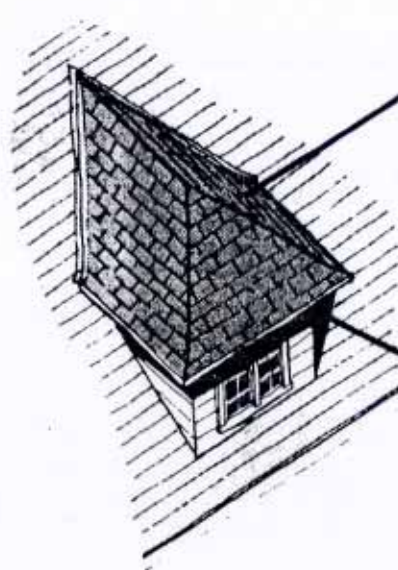


A basic block with centralized geometry and ridged hip, or pyramidal roof



Central (or near-central) chimney; dormers on all four roof sides; porch across entire front of house

Dormer Detail



Hip Roof  
(may also be gabled)

Considerable  
Overhang



Hipped Dormers



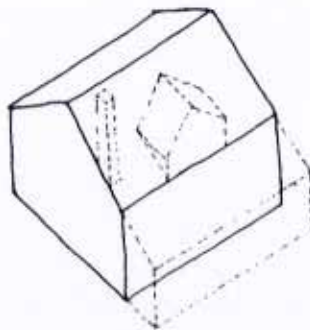
Folded but  
Operable  
Double  
Shutters

Ornamental  
Doorway with  
Transom and  
Sidelights

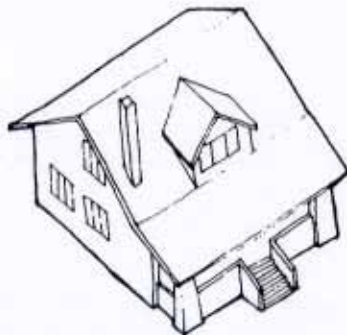
Classical  
Detail



THE BUNGALOW IS CHARACTERIZED BY:



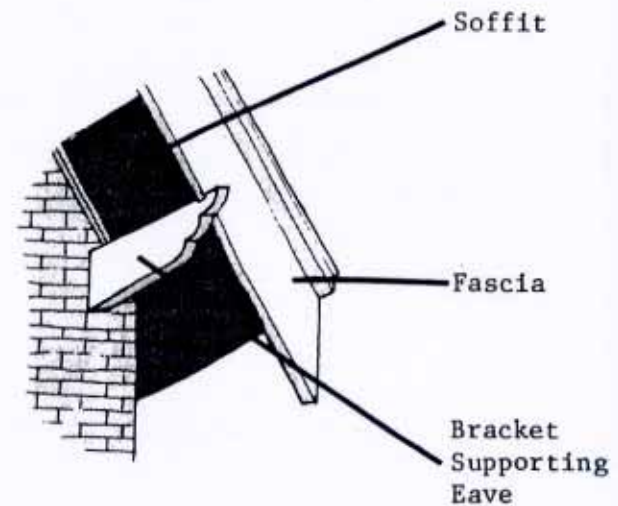
A one-and-one-half story block with broad, sloping roof that extends out over front porch



Broad, overhanging eaves on roof of house and dormer

Wide, solid piers supporting porch roof

Corner Detail with Overhanging Eave



Shed Dormer

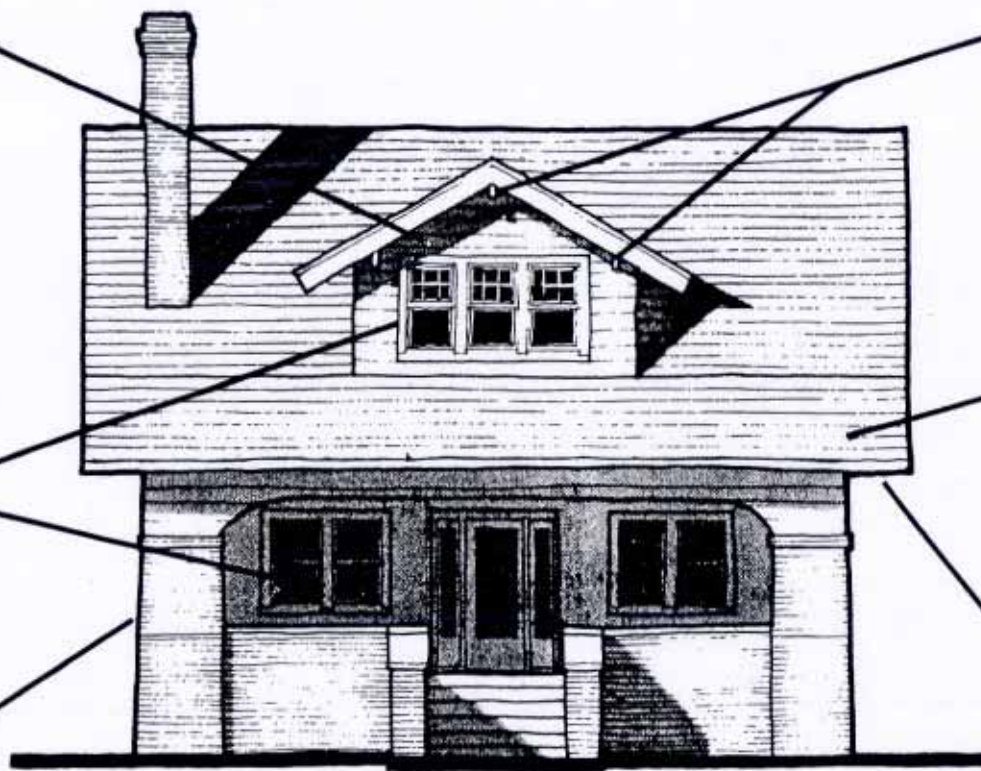
Brackets

Six-over-one  
Window  
Typical

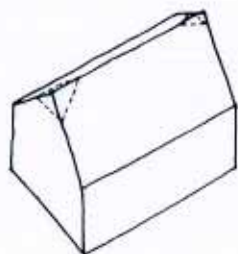
Second Slope of  
Roof  
Covering  
Front Porch

Broad  
Overhang

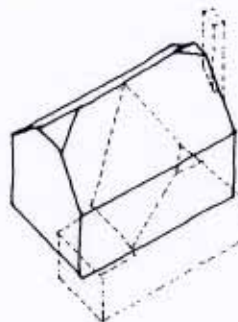
Wide  
Supporting  
Piers



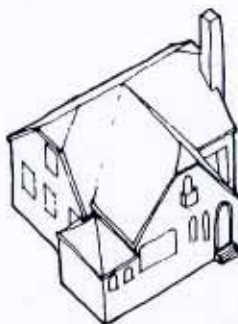
THE ARTS AND CRAFTS COTTAGE IS CHARACTERIZED BY:



Steeply sloping  
roofs (in this  
example, with  
jerkinheads)

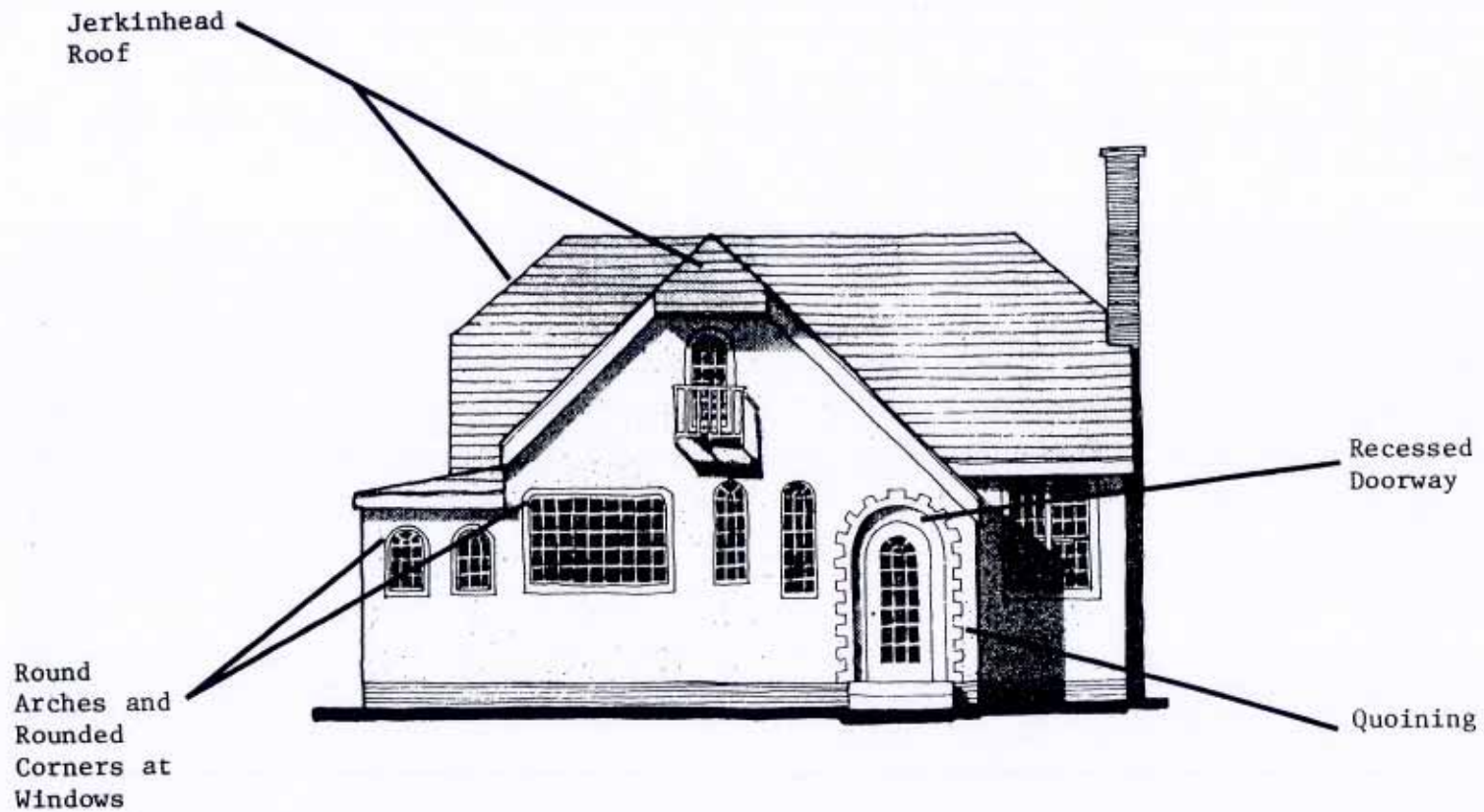


Irregular massing  
of volumes



"Picturesque,"  
asymmetrical  
arrangement of  
doors and windows;  
often, a recessed  
doorway

Note: The Arts and Crafts  
cottage style has few  
specifically charac-  
teristic details of its  
own; ornamentation is  
achieved more often  
from picturesque massing  
and proportion of all  
the elements of the house.





## FRAME HOUSE SIDING

### Clapboarding

A common form of siding for frame houses in Rockville is clapboarding. It consists of wood boards laid up horizontally and overlapping one another about four inches to keep out wind and rain. The resulting horizontal subdivisions and shadow lines give clapboarding its unique expressive qualities and add an important sense of scale to the building.

### \* Aluminum and Vinyl Siding

Aluminum or vinyl clapboarding, though more expensive (but no more attractive) than wood, is sometimes used because it needs no painting. However, aluminum can be dented and scratched easily and permanently, and neither aluminum nor vinyl can be painted over if another color is desired. To be successful in retaining the character of older houses in Rockville, these synthetic materials must look and behave like the material they are imitating. Such effects as "wood graining" (which does not appear on good wood clapboards) should be avoided. The spacing between horizontal lap lines should reproduce that of the original. When it is increased from four to nine inches (as is common in many of the new synthetic sidings), the scale or apparent size of the whole house is changed, and its appearance suffers greatly.

### Cornerboards

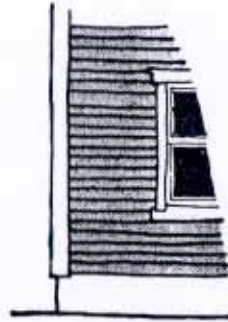
The original cornerboards of a house must be reproduced, whether in wood or in the synthetic material, in their full original width, since the narrow two-inch trim often used in their place likewise changes the scale and appearance of the house. Neither wood nor synthetic clapboarding should run continuously around the corners of a house, but should be trimmed by full-width cornerboards.

### Asphalt and Asbestos Shingles

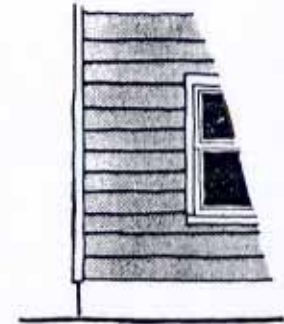
Asphalt and asbestos shingles should be avoided altogether as siding for older houses. They conceal the fine horizontal lines of the original wood clapboards and produce, in turn, a coarse visual effect that seriously weakens the character and expressiveness of older houses in Rockville.

\*Note: See Appendix 4 for further information

Clapboarding (applied  
over joists)

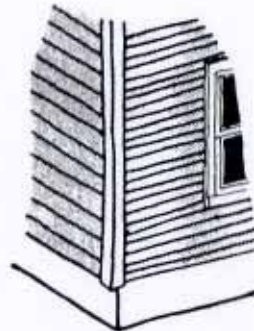


YES



NO

Mixing of  
clapboard sizes

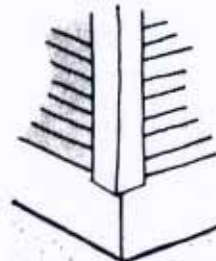


NO

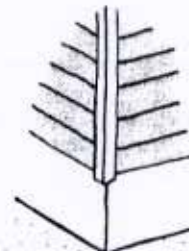


NO

Cornerboards



YES



NO



NO

## BUILDING DETAILS

Dormers

Dormers are an important part of numerous house types in Rockville. For this reason, they should not be removed or altered to any great extent. Any major change from the type and character of the original may spoil the appearance of the house by failing to relate new or modified dormers to the details and windows on the wall below. Dormer windows should not be boarded up, since doing so not only eliminates the purpose for the dormer (light and ventilation) but also upsets the original balance between glass and solid wall areas.

Shingled  
Gables

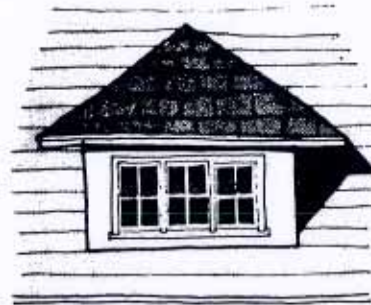
One of the finer features of many wooden houses in Rockville is the use of scalloped wood shingles in the closed gable (triangular upper portion of front wall set off by trim at the bottom) to contrast with the horizontal clapboarding below. This attractive shingled gable is in turn often highlighted by a window or vent which responds in shape and placement to the pitch of the roof line. The shingle surface is an integral part of the character of the original house and should therefore be retained whenever possible. If the original shingles are beyond repair and cannot be duplicated, the best alternative is to substitute the same clapboarding that appears below, but retain the trim around the gable. The use of composition shingle should be avoided at all cost, since this material is too coarse and is likely to detract from the appearance of any house.

Gable  
Vents

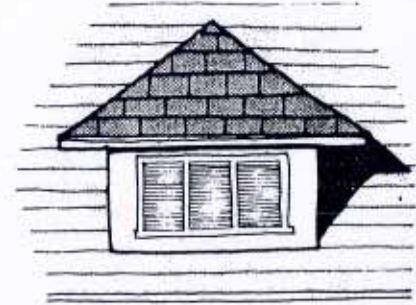
Decorative gable vents are a distinctive ornamental feature of many houses in Rockville. Because they lend balance and interest to the gable wall and often reflect the richness of detail in the house overall, they should be retained in their original form if at all possible. If a replacement is necessary, it should at least retain the general shape and proportions of the original. Complete removal of the decorative vent or its reduction to a few louvered slats leaves a gable wall that appears blank and awkward.



# Dormers



YES



NO

# Gable ends



YES



MAYBE



NO

# Gable vents



YES



MAYBE



NO

## WINDOWS

Windows are an essential part of a house, not only for their functional purpose of admitting air and light, but also for establishing the scale and character of the building. If the original windows on an older house cannot be saved, the new replacement windows should be of the same size and type as the originals.

### Appropriate Window Types

The "double-hung" (or vertically sliding) window is the traditional type in Rockville and should be the first choice when selecting new windows available on the market. The familiar "one-over-one," "two-over-two," and "six-over-one" varieties (which refers to the number of panes in each moving sash) are generally appropriate for use in the majority of houses in the community, which were built in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

"Six-over-six" and other small-paned window types should not be used when restoring or rehabilitating houses in Rockville. Although a common way of "dressing up" buildings to make them look older than they really are, these windows are appropriate only to houses built prior to 1850 and are generally less practical for visibility and maintenance as well.

### Original Openings

New or replacement windows should fill the entire original opening in the wall. The practice of "blocking-up" or "blocking-down" existing window openings to fit a smaller standard window should be avoided at all cost, since it does more than any single thing to change the basic appearance of a house. The results are seldom pleasing in their own right.

Moreover, the cutting of new openings larger than those in the original building -- for example, picture windows in an older house -- should be avoided completely, since it seriously disrupts the scale and pattern of the house as a whole.

### Window Trim

The sash and trim surrounding a window opening are also important elements in the overall balance and integrity of a house design. Original lintels and sills should be retained where possible, and any necessary repairs or replacements should maintain the original appearance of the trim. Sash elements designed to unite a pair of windows should not be removed.

Characteristic  
window types



YES



YES

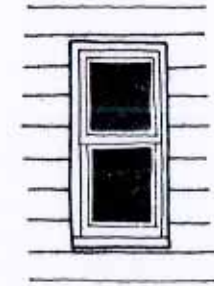


YES

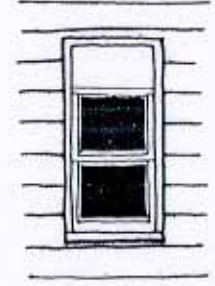
Window  
openings  
and trim



YES



NO



NO



YES



NO



NO



## SHUTTERS

Shutters, used originally to shield the windows and rooms inside from the sun's warm rays, nowadays serve almost exclusively a decorative effect. Generally speaking, the appearance of some houses may be enhanced by the use of shutters if they are properly sized and reasonably authentic and if there is sufficient wall space in relation to the window.

One of the most important ways for achieving a credible installation of shutters, apart from the use of appropriate types on a building for which they were designed, is to make sure that the shutters appear as if they could work. To begin with, they should be large enough to cover the entire window if closed. Shutters that seem too narrow to do so give the house an extremely awkward appearance, as do those that are either longer or shorter than the window opening into which they would have to fit if closed.

When deciding whether or not to use shutters, a basic factor to take into account is their general appropriateness to the type and style of house in question. Even more important to consider is the amount of wall between adjacent windows. If this is less than the width of the windows themselves, there will not be sufficient space for the shutters to lie flat. If the area of wall between the windows is about the same size as the windows themselves, then it will be completely covered by shutters, still producing an awkward visual condition

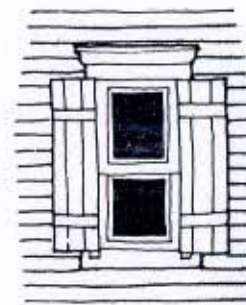
Two-panel shutters



YES



YES



NO

Properly sized to  
cover a window



NO



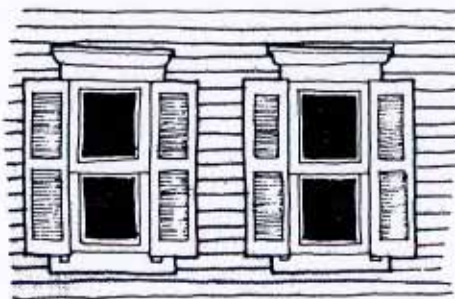
NO



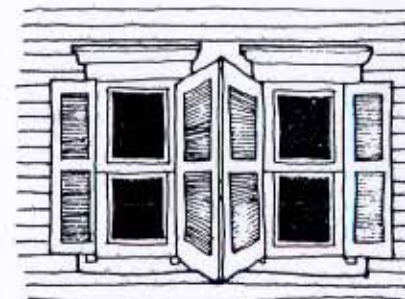
NO

(unless double shutters  
are hinged and folded)

Enough wall surface  
to accommodate shutters



YES



NO

## DOORS AND DOORWAYS

Doors, like windows, are one of the main indicators of character in a house. Too often, they are subjected to needless major modification when perhaps a good paint job would have served as well. Few modifications look better than the original opening, frame, and door.

### Door Openings and Vestibules

Many of the original doorways in Rockville houses include transoms or fanlights above the door, and sidelights to either side. To block up these upper or side portions should be avoided at all costs, since it radically alters not only the basic proportions of the opening and door, but also the general appearance of a house. For the same reason, the addition of a vestibule to an original doorway almost invariably affects the general appearance for the worse.

### Door Frames

Even less satisfactory are efforts to "dress up" a doorway by the addition of inappropriate embellishments. Imitation Colonial pediments, oversized shutters or scrollwork, or scalloped frills generally serve only to destroy an original simplicity that was appropriate and perhaps even elegant.

### Doors

Most of the original doors in Rockville are divided into panels that help establish the proportional relationship between door and house. A similar role is played by the wide trim around the frame and by the choice of hardware originally used. Every effort should be made to retain as much of this existing detail as possible or to make replacements of the same size and type. Flush doors without trim or panels or with incompatible trim and openings should be avoided.

### Storm Doors

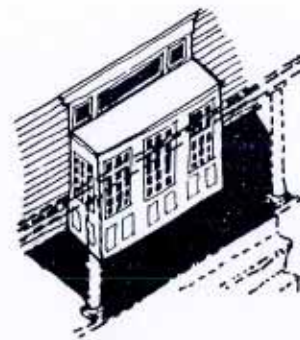
Metal storm and screen doors, although popular, seldom blend in either with the inner door or with the house as a whole. Here, too, fake "Colonial" details only add to the undesirable effect. If storm doors must be used, they should be of simple design and blend in with the inner door and house.



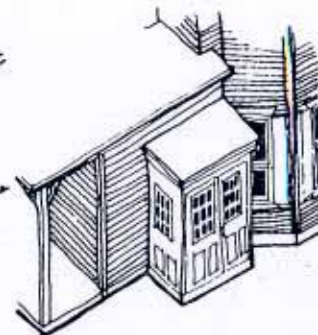
## Vestibules



NO



NO



NO

## Modifications to door frames



YES



NO



NO

## Screen and storm doors



YES



MAYBE



NO

## PORCHES

Porches are a distinctive and inviting feature of Rockville's neighborhoods, affording practical comforts and visual expressiveness as well. Alteration of a porch, if not sensitively done, may disturb a house's original design balance and remove important amenities.

### Removal of a Porch

Complete removal of a front porch or of major porch elements results in visual flatness and the loss of an important public-to-private transitional element. Moreover, it disrupts the relationship of the individual house to its surroundings, a relationship that is one of the most pleasant aspects of Rockville. Every effort should be made to retain original porches or, if repair or replacement is required, to use appropriate materials and the proportions of the original porch.

### Enclosure of a Porch

When a porch is enclosed, by screening for example, its transitional aspect and solid/void relationship to the house should be maintained. Any enclosure by opaque material such as siding is therefore inappropriate, since in effect it destroys the porch and substitutes a shed-like addition. Moreover, to preserve the balance and integral relationship with the house, the whole porch, and not just a part of it, must be dealt with. Panel sizes and types should reflect the existing proportions of other details (windows, doorways) which have established the scale and character of the house.

### Appropriate Replacement Parts

If it is impossible to save the original columns or parts, the replacements should appear similar in shape and character, if not in detail. This applies to the roof and other elements of a porch, as well as to the classical or other decorative ornamentation which predominates in Rockville.

# Porches and their removal



YES



NO



NO

# Enclosure of a porch



YES

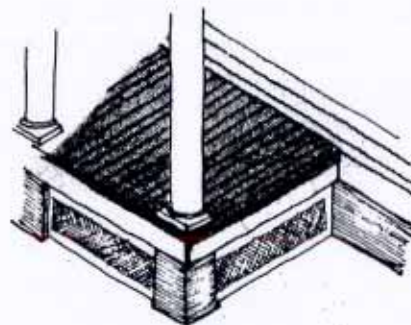


NO

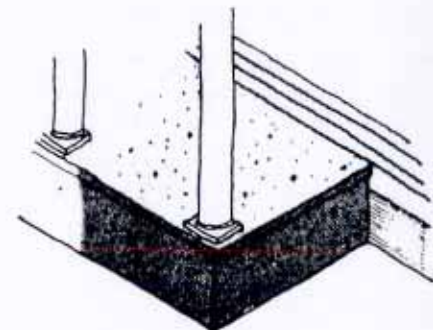


NO

# Porch floor surfaces



YES



NO



## DETRIMENTAL MODIFICATION OF A HOUSE: A CASE STUDY

On the opposite page are two drawings of a Queen Anne style house built by Edwin West in the late 1880's and having features in common with many of the older homes in Rockville.

The first sketch shows the house as it was originally designed, with an attractive and harmonious quality due to the effective use of a few simple elements: the "Rockville bay" made elegant by such details as curved brackets and pent gable; the terraced platform balcony with spindled balustrade situated on the porch roof; the variegated pattern of the roof shingles; and the use of scalloped shingles on the gable, set off by distinctive trim from the wood clapboarding below.

In the second sketch, the elegant simplicity and proportional unity of the original design have been disrupted by drastic modifications of detail and texture. The scale provided by the roofing patterns and scalloped shingles has disappeared, and the four-inch wood clapboarding has been replaced with nine-inch synthetic siding, giving a coarser appearance overall. Small but essential design elements such as the terraced balcony and the gable window have also been destroyed. Perhaps the most significant loss of all is that of the curved brackets; without them, the once-graceful two-story bay has become an awkward and disjointed form.





ORIGINAL DESIGN



UNSYMPATHETIC MODIFICATION

## DETRIMENTAL MODIFICATION OF A HOUSE: A SECOND CASE STUDY

On the opposite page are two drawings of a handsome Victorian cottage style house in Rockville.

The first sketch shows the house as it was originally built. Numerous features and details have been added with care to enliven its appearance in ways reminiscent of so many Victorian houses in Rockville. These include the decorative gable over the side wing, which echoes the regular gable on the end wall facing the street. The decoratively pierced and carved barge boards gracing both gables provide an attractive organizing element for the architectural composition of the simple L-shaped form. The similarly detailed ornamental frieze crowning both front and side porches, supported by handsome turned posts, adds greatly to the unity and character of the overall design.

The second sketch shows a later transformation of the house into a simplified expression of the Colonial Revival style. Regrettably, the remodeling involved removal of the very elements that gave the house its particular charm and grace. Elimination of both the secondary gable and the ornamental barge boards has removed a major source of visual appeal. The use of wider clapboarding and the substitution of an oversized attic window for the original gable lunette have disrupted the earlier sense of scale. Not least, replacement of the elaborate front porch with a much smaller portico has likewise diluted the visual power and unity of the original design, in the process depriving the house of its vital architectural and functional connection to yard and streetscape.



ORIGINAL DESIGN



UNSYMPATHETIC MODIFICATION